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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 001055

SENSITIVE  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [UG](#)  
SUBJECT: UGANDA: DEATHS, DETENTIONS, AND DISTRUST AFTER KAMPALA  
RIOTING

REF: A. KAMPALA 01046, B. KAMPALA 00946

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Calm returned to Kampala on September 12 after the King of Buganda cancelled his trip to Kayunga district. At least 21 people were killed and over 100 wounded during the September 10-11 riots (ref. A). Negotiations between the government and the Buganda remain at an impasse, with President Museveni accusing Buganda of conniving with opposition parties and the Libyan government to undermine the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM). Authorities continue to close radio stations and arrest journalists.  
End Summary.

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The Dead, the Wounded, and the Detained  
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¶2. (SBU) Rioting in Kampala subsided on September 12 after the King of Buganda postponed his visit to the disputed district of Kayunga (see reftel for background). There was sporadic gunfire during the morning of September 12 on the outskirts of Kampala, as well as road closures and checkpoints near the city center amidst a heavy police presence. Several police posts and dozens of vehicles were burnt during the riots. One reportedly Asian-owned paint factory was also torched.

¶3. (SBU) On September 14, state media reported 21 dead and over 100 injured (including 13 police officers) during two days of rioting. Some of those brought to Kampala's overflowing Mulago hospital, including a two year old child who was killed, were hit in their homes by stray bullets. An independent newspaper, the Monitor, is asking citizens to report the names of those killed and wounded so the newspaper can compile a separate, unofficial tally.

¶4. (SBU) On September 12 Buganda Prime Minister John Baptist Walusimbi asked the Inspector General of Police, Kale Kayihura to "restrain his officers and men from indiscriminate shooting against unarmed civilians in order to cool the temperatures." The NGO Human Rights Watch also accused Ugandan police of using excessive force, and we have received credible reports of security forces using batons, whips and rifles to disperse groups of innocent civilians caught at the wrong place at the wrong time.

¶5. (SBU) An estimated 550 to 650 people were arrested during the riots. Local media reports only 82 of these have been charged, meaning that the rest should either be charged today or released. Those arrested include one Member of Parliament, Issa Kikungwe, and one well known radio talk show host, Robert Kalundi Sserumaga (see para 12). Kikungwe is an ethnic Baganda who belongs to the opposition Democratic Party (DP). Police have accused him of inciting rioters.

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Museveni-Buganda Tensions Still High  
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¶6. (SBU) Buganda officials insist the decision not to travel to

Kayunga was based on internal assessments of the King's security and had nothing to do with government orders to cancel the visit. President Museveni had said he would allow the King to visit Kayunga under two conditions: the King receives written permission to travel from the leader of the Banyala, a small ethnic sub-group in the district; and he reins in what Museveni perceives as anti-government rhetoric emanating from the Buganda-owned Central Broadcasting (CBS) radio. The government turned CBS off shortly after the riots began on September 10. Buganda regards both of these conditions as non-starters.

¶7. (SBU) Both the Buganda and the government have disavowed rumors that the King was under house arrest. Museveni and the King reportedly spoke on the telephone on September 13. A face to face meeting may occur later this week. According to local press reports, President Museveni dispatched Maj. Roland Kakooza Mutale, an ethnic Baganda and key presidential adviser on political affairs, to meet with the Buganda King over the weekend. Just two weeks ago, Mutale was accused of kidnapping, holding incommunicado, and torturing a civilian.

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Museveni's Reasoning  
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¶8. (SBU) In a largely extemporaneous speech to ethnic Baganda NRM Members of Parliament on the evening of September 10 (state media later released a heavily edited version of the address), Museveni accused the King of "meddling in politics", while Uganda's constitution restricts the affairs of traditional leaders to "cultural" issues only. Museveni listed the inflammatory rhetoric of the Buganda owned CBS radio station and Buganda's long-standing

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opposition to proposed government land reform as reasons for clamping down on the Kingdom. He accused the King of supporting tenants responsible for the recent lynching of a land owner in Kayunga.

¶9. (SBU) Museveni said Buganda was working with opposition parties to undermine the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM). Information Minister and Chief NRM whip Daudi Migereko on September 12 accused "certain elements" of "dragging cultural institutions into partisan politics in contravention of Article 246 of the Constitution." Migereko singled out Uganda's three main opposition parties - DP, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), and Uganda People's Congress (UPC) - as the main offenders.

¶10. (SBU) Museveni also accused Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi of trying to destabilize Uganda by funneling funds to the Baganda as payback for Museveni's opposition to Qadhafi's United States of Africa proposal. Other commentators, including one columnist in the government-run New Vision newspaper, have suggested that by defending the tiny Banyala against the behemoth Buganda in Kayunga district, Museveni is encouraging other small minorities within the Buganda Kingdom to also assert their independence and further weaken the Kingdom.

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Radio Closings and Journalist Arrests  
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¶11. (SBU) The government closed five radio stations on September 11 - two CBS stations plus Suubi FM, Radio Sapientia, and Radio Two Akaboozi Kubiri - for violating Uganda's Electronic Media act. At least two other stations - Radio Simba and WBS TV - have been warned to censor their reporting or risk closure.

¶12. (SBU) On September 11, well known Radio One talk show host Robert Kalundi Sserumaga was abducted by unidentified assailants riding in an unmarked sedan as he left the WBS studio. He was later dumped in front of a police station and arrested. During a September 12 press conference, Sserumaga's wife, Sarah Nsigaye, appealed for her husband's release. Noting that her grandfather had been bundled into a car and killed by Idi Amin's government in 1976, Nsigaye said "today it is my husband and I don't know what is going

to happen."

¶13. (SBU) Police spokesperson Judith Nabakooba later confirmed that Sserumaga was in police custody and said the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) was currently considering charging him with unspecified "media related offenses." Inspector General of Police Kayihura said Sserumaga had committed "grave offences" during a WBS TV show. WBS TV is under orders not to release a recording of the show to inquiring diplomatic missions or human rights organizations. The government has reportedly threatened to shut WBS down completely if any copies of the recording are released.

¶14. (SBU) The Uganda Broadcasting Council has also suspended WBS TV talk show host Peter Kibazo, and Radio Simba's morning show hosts James Senkubuge Siasa, Andrew Benon Kibuuka, and Gold Kimatono. Three journalists working for the Monitor newspaper also reported being beaten by security forces outside the gates to the Buganda palace on Mengo hill. In the district of Kayunga, Moses Kibuuka of NTV and Yahaya Iga Muyingo of Voice of Africa, were detained by local authorities.

¶15. (SBU) These events follow the arrests of several other journalists in August. Police arrested three journalists working for the Monitor newspaper in early August - two of these arrests stemmed from the Monitor's publication of a letter by President Museveni over the Banyoro crisis (ref. B). On August 18 police arrested and subsequently released on bail the three senior editors of the news magazine The Independent after they published a cartoon of Museveni reviewing a plan for rigging the 2011 presidential election.

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Comment: An Avoidable Confrontation  
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¶16. (SBU) While calm has returned to Kampala, the underlying political conflict between President Museveni and the Buganda Kingdom is far from over. The loss of life over the past few days is particularly unfortunate given that last week's confrontation was likely avoidable had there been greater goodwill and more open lines of communication on both sides of the conflict. The subsequent crack down on journalists is equally disheartening. For the moment, Museveni has won a tactical victory by forcing the King to back down over his planned visit to Kayunga. Strategically, however, Museveni may have permanently alienated a constituency he has depended upon in the past to win elections and stay in power. As one commentator last week noted, Museveni has managed to do in just 10 days what his

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most formidable political opponent, Kizza Besigye, couldn't do in 10 years: turn the Baganda against him.